STATE OF MICHIGAN

Gilbert-Acciavatti spill-protection measures head to governor

LANSING – A person responsible for spilling harmful materials into surface or groundwater will be required to immediately report the spill to local authorities under legislation being sent to the governor.

Senate Bill 977, sponsored by Sen. Jud Gilbert, and House Bill 5586, sponsored by Rep. Dan Acciavatti, mandate that local 911 dispatchers be the first party notified in the event of a chemical spill. Dispatchers will then follow a plan developed by the county emergency management coordinator to get the information to water plants and other local agencies in a prompt manner.

"I'm pleased to send this important legislation to the governor as it will immensely help the local residents along the St. Clair River," said Gilbert, R-Algonac. "Residents need to be notified quickly and immediately calling 911 allows the proper officials to get the information they need to make crucial decisions to safeguard our communities."

The legislation also requires the responsible party to submit a written explanation to the DEQ and local health departments affected by the spill. This report will contain information such as the cause of the spill, what types of materials were released, quantities, response measures taken, and what steps are being taken to prevent another spill.

"There has been a tremendous public outcry for a local alert system to protect our common water supply," said Acciavatti, R-Chesterfield Township. "Until a full monitoring system is in place to automatically alert authorities, we need to take this step to ensure public safety."

In addition to other possible financial and criminal penalties in existing law, new civil penalties may be levied under the new legislation. The penalties will include up to $2,500 for failure to report a spill, and up to $500 for failing to submit a written report of the spill to any affected local health departments.

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